

# LESSON 19

Let's start with a word or two about terminology. Here is how a few of the commentaries I read describe Chapter 6:

One of the most familiar **stories** in the Bible is found in this chapter.

THE **STORY** OPENS with the new king setting up his personal form of government for Babylonia.

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with calling Chapter 6 a “story,” and I may slip up occasionally and call it that myself. But when I am *thinking* about what I should call it, I will use the word “event” rather than the word “story.” The word “story” often connotes fiction, and we are not reading fiction. Instead we are reading about actual historical *events*.

The “kingdom” over which Darius ruled was the old Chaldean kingdom that Cyrus had just conquered. This was the only earthly kingdom that Daniel has been concerned with so far, and so he continues to refer to it as just “the kingdom.” In particular, he is *not* referring to all of Persia.

Verse 1 says that Darius appointed 120 princes over the whole kingdom. The word translated “princes” in the KJV is better translated “satraps.” What is a satrap? Edwin M. Yamauchi, in his book *Persia and the Bible*, wrote:

The satrap was in charge of all aspects of provincial rule. He levied the funds necessary for his administration and provided troops for the king.

Darius' first responsibility was to appoint these 120 administrators over the newly won territory. He appoints 120 satraps and three presidents or commissioners of which Daniel becomes the chairman.

Liberals argue that there weren't really 120 satraps. Are they correct? Be careful — that's a trick question. Satraps operated in areas called satrapies, and the ancient records give various figures for the number of satrapies. Herodotus says there were 20, the Behistun Inscription of Darius I gives 23, and a tomb inscription gives 29 — none is close to 120. So why does Daniel say there were 120 satrapies? He doesn't. He says there were 120 satraps. That word can apply to various levels of administrators, including lower officials of which there could be many in a single satrapy.

Verse 2 tells us that three head administrators (including Daniel) watched over the 120 satraps so that the kingdom would not be damaged. That means Daniel was in charge of watching the tax collectors so that they could not steal from the king. (Do we perhaps see another motive at play here by some in wanting to get honest Daniel out of such a position?)

We see in verse 3 that Daniel's character and integrity are such that Darius plans to make him his prime minister. If Darius answered only to Cyrus, then this position would have made Daniel third in power, which is what the late Belshazzar had promised him!

Why did Darius think so highly of Daniel?

- Daniel had a good reputation. Verse 3 says that an excellent spirit was in him!
- Daniel had recently made a very successful prediction concerning Belshazzar.
- Daniel was not a Chaldean, but he was very familiar with their system.
- Daniel was experienced. (He was over 80 years old at this time!)

And, most importantly, God was on Daniel's side, and God wanted Daniel in this position to influence the new government.

We have seen Daniel from age 13 to age 80, and one thing we can say for sure is that Daniel did *not* suffer from the sin of *pusillanimity*! What sin is that? The word means "smallness of soul." It refers to people who shrink back from all that God wants them to be. When faced with the effort and difficulty of stretching themselves to the great things of which they are capable, they cringe and say, "I can't." Picture Moses at the burning bush. The future leader of Israel stands there stuttering that he's not qualified, and asks God to send Aaron instead.

When Daniel was 13, he did not say he was too young. When Daniel was 80, he did not say he was too old. Even at age 80, Daniel was ready to do whatever God wanted him to do! Nothing stifles church growth faster than pusillanimity!

### **Daniel 6:4**

**4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.**

As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, jealousy (and possibly greed) quickly rears its ugly head. Those who are jealous and envious of Daniel seek at once to bring him down.

Nothing they could possibly do could bring Daniel down one inch. They could lie about him and change the opinion of other men, but they could do nothing to change God's opinion of Daniel — and that is the only opinion that matters.

We need to remember this, particularly when faced with false accusations. God knows the truth, and he will never be fooled by a false accusation. We know that Satan is an accuser of God's people and that he accuses us night and day (Revelation 12:10). We just need to make sure that whatever he accuses us of is not true.

This is not the only place in Scripture where something like this occurs. Jesus, also, was delivered up because of envy, and he also faced false accusers.

In Proverbs 6, God lists seven things that he hates:

**Proverbs 6:17-19** — *Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.*

Of how many of these seven things were these envious men guilty? All seven!

## **Daniel 6:5**

**5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.**

What a compliment! Do people see us this way? If people wanted something bad to say about us, would they find it? We need to make sure that the most anyone can ever truthfully accuse us of is following the law of God!

And the time is coming (and is likely already here) where that accusation alone will be enough to get us fired from our jobs or worse. In other countries, proclaiming God's word on homosexuality can get you jailed, and in many Arab countries proclaiming God's word on *anything* can get you killed.

These accusers knew that to succeed they would have to put Daniel in a position where he would have to choose between obedience to God and obedience to the government (and they knew what he would choose!).

Two questions: (1) Is that true of us? (2) Does the world know that it is true of us? Daniel's life was such that these men knew he would choose God when forced to make this choice. Are our lives such that the world knows that we too will choose God when forced to make such a choice? Or have we already shown them otherwise?

But there was a problem: Persia had no law against monotheism. The solution? They would just create a law that would look merely political to Darius, but would pose a religious issue for Daniel.

Again we see history repeat itself. The so-called "hate speech" and "hate crime" laws may sound good on the surface until you ask how their authors define "hate." For most of them, mere disagreement is equated with hatred, and so just reading Romans 1 out loud can be called a hate crime.

### **Daniel 6:6-9**

**6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O**

**king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.**

Notice that these envious accusers show up in a group to work their plan. Such people always seems to travel in a pack! Daniel stood alone before a pack of false accusers, as did Jesus.

Darius should have noticed that Daniel was not present, but as we will soon see, Darius was completely unsuspecting. He did not know that these men were out to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor.

What was the proposed law? For one month, all petitions and all prayers in the realm must be directed toward Darius only. Those who disobeyed would be cast into a den of lions.

Verse 7 uses the phrase “whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man.” The word for “petition” just means request, but the reference to “any God” certainly suggests that religious requests are in view, as does the motive for this law to target Daniel for his prayers.

But what then is meant by a petition to a man? It likely refers to priests to whom petitions were directed so that the priest could mediate to the gods.

Darius likely did not see this law as making him a god to whom prayers would be directed, but rather as making him for 30 days the only priestly mediator to whom such requests could be made. He wanted to be the only middleman, and he wanted

everyone to pray through a middleman. For 30 days, Darius was to be the only legitimate representative of deity.

Why did Darius agree with such a suggestion?

- It was very flattering.
- It reinforced the idea that the empire was now under new management. It would help unify the kingdom under Darius and Cyrus.
- It was a reasonable time limit. What harm could it cause to impose this seemingly modest requirement for only 30 days?

Darius was under the impression that Daniel had agreed to this plan. (Verse 7 says all the presidents of the kingdom had agreed to the plan when in fact they had not.)

Although the penalty was severe, Darius no doubt thought that it would never be imposed. Who could possibly fail to follow this simple 30 day requirement?

Why were offenders to be cast into a den of lions instead of into a fiery furnace? The Persians used fire in their religious ceremonies and thus would not have cast anyone into fire as a form of punishment. Edwin M. Yamauchi has written the following in this regard in his book *Persia and the Bible*:

But it is especially to fire and water that they offer sacrifice. ... Fire stands at the center of the Zoroastrian cult; no ceremony can take place without fire being present.

If Daniel had been written by a second century Jew living in Palestine as some suggest, then how did such an author know about this subtle difference between the Chaldean and Persian methods of execution? (And this would be the same author who they say was so badly mistaken about the well-known historical leaders of the time!)

Verse 8 tells us that the law could not be altered. Verses 12 and 15 will tell us the same thing. Why couldn't the law be changed or revoked?

Having a law that stood even above the despot was a very politically sophisticated system of government. Although we take it for granted, it was quite rare at the time (and is at risk of becoming rare once again!).

Although we can only speculate about the reason for this system, this same requirement provided the drama in the book of Esther after the decree went out to kill the Jews. (See Esther 1:19 and 8:8.)

History tells us that it also played a role during the reign of Darius III who ruled from 336 to 331 BC. Diodorus of Sicily reported the case of a man put to death under Darius III even though he was known to be perfectly innocent.

[Darius III] immediately repented and blamed himself for having committed such a great error, but it was impossible to have undone what had been done by royal authority.

Here is a tough question for us to consider: Darius was not above his own law. Is God above his own law? We might be tempted to say that God is above everything, and therefore he is above his own law and could break it if he wanted to. But that is a very dangerous road and leads to many even harder questions — if Jesus was above his own law, then how was he ever tempted to break that law?

The solution to all of this is to recognize that Darius' relation to his law is completely different from God's relation to his law. God's law is always a perfect expression of God's character and God's will. About what *human* law could we ever say:

**Psalm 19:7-8** — *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

The answer is none. That description is true only of the law of God. The law of God is perfect because it is the perfect expression of God's character. It doesn't make sense to ask if God is above or below his own law. We cannot separate the law of

God from the character of God. What we see here in Chapter 6 is a situation in which the law of Darius no longer reflected the will of Darius. That could never happen with the law of God because God's law is the perfect expression of God's will.

But with all of that being said, there is one way in which God has voluntarily bound himself — one way in which God's will for us may *not* be what ultimately happens to us. Peter in 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” But we know from other Scriptures that not all will be saved. Why? Because God has given us free will, and often man's will is not aligned with God's will. God's will is that we all be saved, yet our will may be different, and God has given us free will to obey or to disobey.

**C.S. Lewis:** There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, in the end, “Thy will be done.” All that are in Hell, choose it.

### **Daniel 6:10**

**10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.**

Note that verse 10 tells us plainly that Daniel at some point learned that the document had been signed. Thus, whatever he does next is not done in ignorance of the decree. He knows the new law, and he knows the penalty for breaking it.

The chamber in verse 10 should be translated as an upper chamber. That Daniel's house had such a chamber likely indicates his high status.

And what did Daniel do when he heard about the decree? Did he run to the king to ask that it be changed or that he be excused? No — he went before a different King! He went to God in prayer. Do we see prayer only as a last resort — or do we start with prayer as Daniel did?

Notice what we do **not** see in verse 10. We see no inner turmoil on Daniel's part — no wondering what to do. This was **not** decision time for Daniel — his decision to follow God had occurred nearly 80 years ago! All we see now is his unflinching obedience.

Daniel's prayers had been his lifeline all those years under the corrupting Babylonian influences. What would he do now that this decree had become the law of the land?

**Option 1:** He could do nothing — that is, he could compromise and simply not pray for one month. (Sadly, for some, this would hardly be noticed!) This plan would have several advantages.

First, it would be the most peaceful plan. Nobody would get upset. But Daniel knew that peace at any price was too costly if the price was disobedience to God.

Second, this plan would allow Daniel to follow the path of least resistance. It would be the easy way out. But Daniel knew that the path of least resistance never intersects the path of righteousness. In fact, for Daniel, the path of righteousness was the path of *most* resistance!

Daniel could not simply do nothing and hope for the best. He knew what James tells us:

**James 4:17** — *Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*

Daniel had to act. To do nothing would have been a sin.

**Option 2:** Daniel could have gone underground and prayed silently or at night when no one could see him.

Sadly, many today seem to have adopted this plan. But God has never put out a call for secret agents! We must speak out and let the world know where we stand. If we are on God's side, then we must let the world know.

This plan might appear to be the best of both worlds. Daniel could please both God and man by just praying silently. Wrong! It is not possible to please God if at the same time you are trying equally hard to please men.

**Galatians 1:10** — *Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.*

Sometimes it is easy to just ignore what we might consider the “little” compromises. But the little things are training for the big things!

**Jeremiah 12:5** — *If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you fall down, how will you do in the jungle of the Jordan?*

**Luke 16:10** — *One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much.*

The time to take a stand against the world is early before it gets a foothold because once it gets a foothold it may be too late.

Had Daniel quit praying as he normally did and instead began to pray in secret — how would the world have viewed that? What sort of example would that have set for the Persians or for the other exiles?

The world has no problem with our religion — as long as we keep it to ourselves. But we cannot please God if we keep our religion to ourselves. And we can't be the salt of the earth if we keep our religion to ourselves.

**Option 3:** Daniel could have rationalized. Just think how much good he could do if he stayed in power. He had just gotten his power back after being without it for so long. God wouldn't want him to lose it again so quickly, would he?

We too are faced with such choices every day. Remember what Joshua said:

**Joshua 24:14-15** — *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

The false gods of the Amorites haven't gone anywhere! They are with us to this day. We must make a choice.

**Deuteronomy 30:19** — *I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.*

We must choose whose side we are on, and, once we do that, all of our other decisions will be easy. Should we compromise with the world or should we do what we know is right and stand with God? Listen to Paul's answer:

**Ephesians 5:11** — *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.*

Isn't that exactly what Daniel did? Not only did he did not take part in the wicked plan, but he exposed the wicked plan.

**Option 4:** Daniel could concern himself with pleasing God instead of pleasing men and not worry about the consequences — and that is exactly what Daniel did.

There was no decision to be made. Daniel had made the decision to follow God long ago, and whether he was 13 or 83, Daniel would not compromise with the world. What a wonderful example of faithfulness and loyalty to God!

Why did Daniel pray toward Jerusalem? It seems to have been based on statements by Solomon made at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8.

**1 Kings 8:44-45** — *If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way thou shalt send them, and they pray to the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for thy name, then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause*

Also, God's presence resided in the temple:

**1 Kings 8:10-11** — *And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.*

While Ezekiel 11:23 tells us that this presence left prior to the destruction of the city in 587 BC, Ezekiel 43:2 tells us that God promised to return — and in fact Cyrus' order to rebuild the city had probably already been given.

Why did Daniel pray three times a day? That likely came from Psalm 55.

**Psalm 55:17** — *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.*

Daniel had a habit of praying to God, and that is what he was going to do. There is nothing wrong with habits if they are good habits, and we too should pray habitually and study God's word habitually — and we should not let anything stop us. Not even lions were able to stop Daniel! What does it take to stop us? Daniel would rather have been eaten by lions than stop praying to God!

For what was Daniel praying? In Daniel 9:1-2 we will discover that since Darius had begun to reign Daniel had been reading Jeremiah with regard to the 70 year period of exile. Thus Daniel knew it was time for his people to return from their exile, and indeed many may have already returned. Thus, the returning captives may have been the primary item on Daniel's prayer list, and he could hardly stop praying for them now that they needed his prayers the most.

At first glance, this event looks just like what we saw earlier with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — but there is an important difference. Here evil men were trying to force Daniel to shirk his duty for *true* worship, whereas the earlier event with Daniel's three friends was focused on an attempt to make them engage in *false* worship. Chapters 3 and 6 together warn us to avoid false worship and to pursue true worship, no matter the cost. We must avoid the strange fire, and we must use the approved fire.

### **Daniel 6:11-12**

**11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.**

**12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is**

**true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.**

This group waited around for Daniel to pray, and then they went and reported to Darius as soon as he did. “Like little children, they were peeking around corners and looking in windows.”

Notice the word “thou” in verse 12. Suddenly this law has become the king’s idea!

Darius is reminded of his decree. Darius not only remembers, but he also points out that the law of the Medes and Persians cannot be revoked.

This passage provides absolute proof that Daniel did not believe that a separate Median kingdom conquered the Chaldeans prior to the Persian kingdom under Cyrus. The late-date hypothesis that the second kingdom is Media and the third kingdom is Persia cannot stand in the face of verse 12. Daniel treats Media and Persia as a unified kingdom — which all historians agree they were.

We are about to watch God as he changes and revokes a law that cannot be changed or revoked!

**Mark 10:27** — *With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*